

Fernald Closure Project

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Fluor Fernald

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First Major Portion of Former Production Area Certified Clean

CINCINNATI – For the first time since the Fernald cleanup began, a large portion of the former uranium production area has been restored to remediation levels established by the U.S. and Ohio Environmental Protection Agencies. In December, Fluor Fernald completed a massive four-year undertaking that involved removing 467,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil and debris from 27 acres in the heart of the site. This footprint once included the Sampling Plant, Plant 1 Pad, the Special Products Plant, Boiler Plant and Thorium Warehouses. The contaminated dirt and debris removed from this area could fill two football fields and extend 11 stories tall.

During the course of 40 years of uranium metal production, a majority of the soil around and beneath these facilities became radioactively contaminated. Pre-remediation levels of uranium contamination in soil ranged from just above the cleanup target level of 20 parts-per-million (ppm) to 76,400 ppm, with flashes of uranium product reaching levels of 850,000 ppm. Not only did the project meet the 20 ppm standard, but in most cases the soil is closer to the average background uranium concentration of 4.6 ppm typically found in this region.

“Literally hundreds of workers share in this achievement; from demolition crews who removed the buildings to heavy equipment operators removing soil to the radiation technicians and environmental scientists who pulled and monitored thousands of soil samples,” said Fluor Fernald Closure Project Director Jamie Jameson.

With the addition of 27 acres, more than 700 of Fernald's 1050 acres are now certified clean. Previously, only soil outside the former production area was certified because it was immediately available to site workers. These areas were addressed first because they were without above grade structures, had relatively low levels of contamination and served to help hone the intense process of sampling and documentation necessary to support reaching EPA cleanup levels.

“We’ve worked closely with US and Ohio EPA’s well before the first shovel full of dirt was ever removed. What we’ve developed is a reliable, safe and efficient process that not only meets, but has been shown to exceed our rigorous soil cleanup standards,”

said DOE Project Director Bill Taylor. "Our goal is to leave an asset for the community."

Once an area has been certified clean restoration crews will begin final grading, seeding and planting of native vegetation. Final grading will focus on the establishment of wetland basins and ponds. A significant part of the final grading work involves adding organic matter back to the remediated soil to support vegetation. Native Ohio grasses and trees are seeded and planted in accordance with the site restoration plan. It is projected that 80 acres of wetlands, 60 acres of ponds and almost 400 acres of prairie will be established on Fernald property once restoration is complete. To date, approximately 300 acres have already been restored at a cost of more than \$2.3 million.

Fluor expects to complete the cleanup, soil certification and all restoration by spring 2006. The DOE's Office of Legacy Management will be responsible for the long-term care of the site once cleanup is complete.

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